



February 26, 2021

Maryland Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

Dear Senator Pinsky and Committee Members,

As a representative of the American Massage Therapy Association, Maryland Chapter, we are asking for your support of **SB745 Health Occupations – State Board of Massage Therapy Examiners – Revisions**.

The Maryland Department of Health has licensed or registered those who practice massage therapy for over 20 years with over 4000 professionals currently in in practice. During that time, language, technology, and information access has shifted dramatically.

This legislation is an update to the massage therapy practice act. It modernizes the criminal background check process, standardizes higher education massage curriculum standards statewide, and gives the board authority to create an ‘inactive status,’ making it easier for massage therapists to return to practice after time away from the profession.

The bill makes several technical changes including a variety of language updates to bring the massage therapy practice act in line with modern-day practices and education. These changes:

- Remove outdated terms (effleurage, petrissage, tapotement, laying of hands) and replaces them with clear language (stroking, kneading, tapping, hands on application).
- Eliminates unnecessary language regarding insurance coverage, and
- For communicable disease precautions it replaces the CDC’s guidelines on universal precautions with the correct and current CDC guidelines on standard precautions.

This bill makes two major changes.

**First, it creates a standard for massage education curriculums throughout the state, with the Commission on Massage Therapy Accreditation (COMTA) endorsed curriculum.** COMTA is nationally recognized as the organization qualified to create this specialized national standard for Massage Therapy education programs. Requiring COMTA Endorsed Curriculum of all Massage Schools will bring a higher level and more consistent standards to all the Massage Therapy training programs. Future massage students will be assured of a more consistent education that adequately prepares them for their new career, while the Maryland Board knows that their education has met their requirements for the safety of the public. Most community colleges already use COMTA or similar guidelines for their curriculum standards to ensure students are prepared to pass their licensing exams and enter practice.

**Second, it modernizes the criminal background check process for massage therapists.**

Many Maryland health occupations boards use the Criminal Justice Information System Central Repository to receive information about changes criminal history. This legislation adds the Maryland Board of Massage Therapy Examiners (MBMTE) to the system. Today, licensed massage therapists and registered massage practitioners update their licensure every two years. During the bi-annual update, they're required to self-report criminal activity. Criminal activity can also be reported by a third party. By adding the MBMTE to the Central Repository, the licensing board for the massage therapists will be notified more frequently than every two years, and as a result will be able to investigate and take action.

The health occupations boards for audiology, speech language pathologists, nursing administrators, chiropractic, nursing, occupational therapists, physicians, professional counselors, and social workers have already made this change.

Although there is an impact to about half of the LMTs and RMPs, who would be required to get new fingerprints to comply with the law, the American Massage Therapy Association, Maryland Chapter supports the change. The burden of time and expense that is reasonable in relation to the benefits of the new system for the State Board and their responsibility to protect the public.

Thank you for your time and attention to this legislation. We would appreciate your support of SB745.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amelia Mitchell', with a stylized, cursive script.

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